

# REFUGEE EDUCATION

## RESEARCH DIGEST

*The Education Research Digest features the latest evidence on refugee education, with a focus on thematic areas. The digest aims to provide a balanced and comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge and practice on each thematic area, as well as to identify gaps and priorities for future research and action. The recommendations for policy and practice and research made in this digest are taken from the cited literature. They reflect the findings of the authors of the literature and should not be interpreted as recommendations made by the authors of the digest or endorsed by UNHCR. The digest presents a brief overview of the main findings from a number of relevant publications, from academia and grey literature, with links to the full texts (where available). The publications covering are selected based on criteria such as relevance, quality, timeliness and diversity of sources and perspectives. The second and third parts of the digest include information on relevant resources and forthcoming events on refugee education.*

### Latest Research

#### IN BRIEF

##### **Education and integration in countries with Syrian children: Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Germany and Turkey**

Author, Publication, Year: Fansa, M., & Sayıcı, M., *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 2025

Abstract: Today, the number of people fleeing conflicts, wars, human rights violations and difficult living conditions in



their countries and seeking refuge in other countries is rapidly increasing. We witness the movements of people fleeing from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and Eritrea and pursuing their right to live elsewhere. This necessitates the countries hosting refugees to adopt an integration approach towards the refugee population. This research aims to describe integration in refugee education, the inclusive education approach and the education policies and practices of the countries that

host the highest number of refugees after the Syrian migration. Data were collected through document analysis and analyzed using descriptive analysis. Documents included national education policies, international reports, and institutional evaluations from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Germany, and Sweden. The findings show that in countries where Syrians are concentrated, a holistic approach model is lacking, with host countries demonstrating fragmented coordination, insufficient teacher training, language-related barriers, and limited long-term support. In Lebanon and Jordan, for example, education relies heavily on informal systems due to resource constraints. As a result of the research, the authors propose to carry out further studies that describe the problems experienced in refugee education, offer solutions, and support the development of more inclusive and sustainable educational practices by host states.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Develop child-centred and holistic integration frameworks:** Move beyond access-focused strategies to include emotional, social, and developmental needs of refugee children.

**Strengthen language and psychosocial support systems:** Provide tailored language education and trauma-informed services to enhance inclusion and learning outcomes.

**Address systemic and structural barriers:** Tackle challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient school infrastructure, and documentation requirements that disproportionately exclude refugee learners.

**Align education policy with implementation realities:** Ensure that inclusive national policies are supported by adequate resources, teacher training, and monitoring systems to close the gap between stated goals and on-the-ground practices.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Conduct cross-country comparative studies on integration outcomes:** More studies to examine how differing national approaches affect refugee students' educational trajectories and social well-being.

**Evaluate the impact of legal status on educational inclusion:** Explore how citizenship or the lack thereof shapes access, retention, and success in education.

**Document and scale promising practices:** Identify local or regional education models that successfully integrate refugee children and explore their scalability in other contexts.

Link: [Download article \[pdf\]](#)

Tag: Basic Education / Secondary Education / Emergencies

### **IN BRIEF**

## **Understanding the educational landscape for refugee background students in non-metropolitan Australia: a scoping review**

Author, Publication, Year: Jamal Al-deen, T., *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 2025

Abstract: This scoping review explores the educational experiences of refugee-background students (RBSs) within remote, rural and regional Australia, synthesising literature published between 2015 and 2024 to identify unique educational challenges. Following Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage approach—(1) identifying the research question, (2) identifying relevant studies, (3) study selection, (4) charting the data, and (5) collating, summarising,

and reporting the results—the review uncovers key themes at the intersection of refugee education and non-metropolitan settings. Identified challenges in the literature include: limited access to resources, barriers to school engagement, academic success, and a sense of belonging. Understanding these complex dynamics is essential because such schools often operate within racialised communities with fewer resources, limiting their capacity to support RBSs. Nevertheless, schools also represent critical sites for fostering resilience and community among these students. The review highlights the need for tailored educational policies and practices that support inclusive learning environments recognising students' diverse backgrounds. Such approaches can facilitate integration and enhance educational outcomes, contributing to a more supportive and equitable educational landscape for RBSs.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Extend language support beyond initial settlement periods:** Many RBSs require foundational literacy and ongoing English support well past the 6-12 months typically offered through Intensive Language Centres.

**Revise funding models to support long-term integration:** Eligibility for refugee-specific funding should reflect students' evolving needs, not be limited by arbitrary timeframes such as five years.

**Strengthen teacher training on English as an Additional Language (EAL) and inclusive pedagogies:** Mainstream teachers need targeted professional development to effectively engage refugee learners in linguistically and culturally responsive ways.

**Develop anti-racism strategies that center local contexts:** Schools should embed anti-racist education tailored to regional dynamics to foster belonging and challenge discriminatory norms.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Investigate long-term educational trajectories of RBSs in rural Australia:** Longitudinal studies are needed to understand how rural education shapes the academic and life outcomes of refugee-background learners.

**Explore effective rural teacher training models:** Future research should identify what types of professional development improve inclusive teaching capacities in non-metropolitan schools.

**Assess the impact of community partnerships on student inclusion:** More studies are needed to examine how collaboration with local networks enhances belonging and resilience for refugee-background students.

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### **IN BRIEF**

#### **Windle Trust International Kenya and placement of refugee students in higher education institutions**

Author, Publication, Year: Dido, I. T., & Kiruthu, F., *Int'l Academic Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 2025

Abstract: The integration of refugees into higher education presents numerous challenges, particularly within refugee environments where instability and uncertainty prevail. Higher education, however, plays a critical role in future social and labor market integration. This study examines the effect of Windle International Kenya (WIK) placement programme for refugee students to higher institutions in Kenya. The research adopted a descriptive research design, guided by Social Learning Theory and Systems Theory, to explore WIK's effect on refugee education. A target

population of 577 participants, including WIK staff, guardians of beneficiary students, and refugee students from Dagahaley Camp, were selected. One hundred and seventy-two refugee students were sampled using purposive and random techniques. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires and interviews, and analyzed



using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from 172 refugee students were analyzed using SPSS, with descriptive and regression analysis used to assess the programme's impact. The findings indicate that WIK's placement programme has a significantly positive effect on refugee students' access to higher education. In addition to improved enrolment, participants reported increased academic motivation, stronger career aspirations, and enhanced psychosocial well-being through peer and mentor support. The programme also helped

students navigate the transition from secondary to tertiary education, although some implementation challenges, such as limited funding and inadequate institutional infrastructure, were noted. It is recommended that WIK's placement programme continue to be supported and expanded to further improve access to higher education for refugees. Strengthening institutional partnerships and integrating supportive policies can further enhance its impact.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Expand access and placement opportunities through sustained funding mechanisms:** Increase long-term financial support to expand WIK's placement programme across more institutions and refugee populations, addressing current limitations in reach and continuity.

**Strengthen institutional partnerships to support refugee learners:** Facilitate collaboration between placement programmes and higher education institutions to ensure that host campuses are equipped with the necessary infrastructure, staff capacity, and student support services.

**Integrate career guidance and academic mentorship in placement design:** Embed structured mentoring and career awareness activities within the programme to support students' transitions, improve academic performance, and build long-term aspirations.

**Establish a national framework for refugee higher education inclusion:** Advocate for policy frameworks that recognize refugee education as a national development priority and provide clear guidelines for placement, funding, psychosocial support, and institutional responsibilities.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Evaluate support mechanisms empirically:** Future studies should use mixed-method frameworks to measure the effectiveness of guidance, mentorship, and financial aid on student retention and performance.

**Explore guardian and peer support dynamics:** Conduct qualitative and longitudinal studies on how family and peer networks contribute to refugee students' academic persistence and psychosocial well-being.

**Design longitudinal impact studies:** More research is needed to track cohorts of refugee students over time to assess the sustained effectiveness of placement and support interventions on educational and labour market outcomes.

Link: [Download article \[pdf\]](#)

Tag: Tertiary Education / Emergencies

#### IN BRIEF

### Exacerbating exclusion? How the logic of refugee education perpetuates the exclusion of refugees with disabilities in Lebanon

Author, Publication, Year: Costantini, G., & El-Serafy, Y., *International Review of Education*, 2025

Abstract: This article assesses how the logic of refugee education affects the inclusion of refugees with disabilities. It draws on academic literature, sociological and ethnographic research conducted in Lebanon, and conversations between the authors based on their respective doctoral research projects with refugees with disabilities and education practitioners. The first author conducted semi-structured interviews during two months of fieldwork and four months of remote interviews, drawing on critical disability theory and grounded theory. The second author carried out 10 months of ethnographic research using a portraiture methodology and a phenomenological epistemological approach. The article identifies four tensions between prevailing refugee education frameworks and the logics needed for disability-inclusive education: (1) securitisation logic, which frames refugee inclusion within a national and global security discourse, excluding refugees with disabilities who do not fit the constructed image of the “threatening migrant” and are therefore deprioritised in both policy and programming; (2) neoliberal logic, which treats inclusion through a cost–benefit lens and reinforces ableist assumptions; (3) vulnerability logic, which constructs disability as weakness and undermines agency; and (4) conflicting temporal logics between emergency responses and long-term inclusive education. These logics, deeply embedded in dominant humanitarian discourse, lead to the marginalisation and disempowerment of refugees with disabilities. The article concludes by calling for critical reflection within the refugee education sector to rethink the conceptual frameworks that currently impede truly inclusive and dignified education for all.

#### Recommendations for policy and practice:

**Interrogate dominant refugee education frameworks:** Policymakers and practitioners should critically reflect on how securitisation discourses, which prioritize certain refugee profiles over others, may exclude and make invisible learners with disabilities from educational planning.

**Rethink funding models rooted in cost–benefit logic:** Neoliberal principles that privilege future economic productivity often devalue inclusive education. Funding frameworks should be designed to uphold education as a right, not just an investment in human capital.

**Reframe disability through inclusive narratives, not vulnerability:** The prevailing use of vulnerability frameworks can perpetuate paternalism. Instead, refugee education should emphasize diversity, agency, and equity in its engagement with disability.

**Bridge the temporal divide between emergency and inclusive education:** Emergency education tends to be short-term and reactive, while inclusive education is developmental and sustained. Programmes should intentionally align immediate access with long-term goals of inclusion and growth.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Explore intersectional exclusion in refugee education:** Future research should examine how disability interacts with other social identities—such as gender, age, or legal status—to compound educational disadvantage.

**Evaluate disability-inclusive strategies in refugee contexts:** There is a need for more empirical studies that assess which inclusive pedagogical practices effectively support refugee learners with disabilities across different settings.

**Track long-term outcomes of inclusive education interventions:** Longitudinal studies are essential to understand how inclusive refugee education impacts academic achievement, social belonging, and life opportunities for learners with disabilities.

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Tag: Basic Education / Emergencies

### **IN BRIEF**

## **The relational refugee child: trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches to educational inclusion**

Author, Publication, Year: Boukhari, S., *Education Sciences*, 2025

**Abstract:** This article explores the concept of the Relational Refugee Child (RRC), emphasising the importance of trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches in fostering refugee students' educational and social integration. Refugee children often navigate multifaceted layers of disconnection resulting from cultural, linguistic, and spatial barriers, which challenge their sense of belonging and participation in educational systems. Drawing on a qualitative study involving 26 sub-Saharan refugee children aged 10-14, and six key adult stakeholders (two NGO representatives, two teachers, one headteacher, and one consultant) in an Algerian national school, this article critically explores the relational dimensions of refugee education. It highlights how systemic factors such as language policies, which prioritise Arabic as the sole language of instruction, and prevailing negative perceptions of refugee students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, shape refugee students' experiences, often contributing to their marginalisation within educational settings. The study contends that trauma-informed practices, which centre the refugee child, are crucial in addressing the psychological and social burdens of displacement. Simultaneously, culturally and linguistically inclusive pedagogies that actively challenge the marginalisation of other cultures and languages may offer transformative potential by validating refugee students' identities, fostering meaningful connections, and enhancing their sense of agency. These approaches counter the dominance of monolingual ideologies and recognise the profound cultural and motivational significance of minority languages and cultures. By situating refugee education within the broader framework of relational inclusion, this article advocates for an integrative approach that merges trauma-informed strategies with inclusive methodologies.

## **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Design relational and inclusive learning environments:** Promote classroom arrangements that encourage interaction and visibility (e.g., U-shaped or circular seating) to reduce isolation and foster belonging among refugee learners.

**Embed trauma-informed, culturally responsive training in teacher development:** Integrate modules on trauma-informed pedagogy, critical reflection, and language/cultural responsiveness into pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes.

**Institutionalize multilingual and translanguaging practices:** Endorse language-diverse practices at the policy level, recognizing translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogical strategy that affirms students' linguistic identities.

**Develop peer-mentorship and arts-based relational activities:** Support school-based projects—such as storytelling circles, collaborative art, and peer support—that enhance emotional expression and inter-cultural dialogue.

## **Recommendations for research:**

**Conduct comparative studies on classroom configurations and inclusion:** Investigate how different classroom layouts (traditional row, U-shape, flexible grouping) impact refugee students' sense of visibility, participation, and well-being.

**Evaluate the effectiveness of relational teacher-training programmes:** Future studies to use mixed-method designs to assess how trauma-informed and culturally responsive training influences teachers' attitudes, instructional practices, and student engagement.

**Explore the impact of translanguaging pedagogies in refugee education:** Conduct empirical studies on how multilingual teaching strategies affect refugee students' academic confidence, participation, and language development.

**Undertake longitudinal action research on relational pedagogy:** Track the long-term outcomes of implementing relationally oriented practices—such as arts-based healing or dialogic routines—on refugee learners' psychosocial development and learning progress.

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## **IN BRIEF**

### **Do refugee students feel well at school? An analysis of the influence of individual, social, and structural factors**

Author, Publication, Year: Will, G., Horr, A., Becker, R., & Homuth, C., *Education Sciences*, 2025

Abstract: Well-being at school is central to successful learning and dealing with challenges at school. While previous research mostly explored general student well-being, less attention has been paid to the specific challenges faced by refugee students, who enter the school system as lateral entrants and represent a particularly vulnerable group. Building on an established multilevel theoretical framework, this study examines the interplay between individual factors (e.g., academic performance), social factors (e.g., peer relationships), and structural factors (e.g., school type). In addition to general factors, it particularly focuses on refugee-specific stressors—such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), asylum procedure uncertainties, and integration policies—integrated into the model using

the Cultural Stress Theory. Analyses draw on data from the longitudinal study 'ReGES—Refugees in the German Educational System', with a sample of 2,415 refugee adolescents in lower secondary school. Results from multivariate models reveal that refugee-specific factors significantly influence school well-being: uncertain residence status, perceived discrimination, and cultural difficulties are associated with lower well-being, while teacher support has a strong positive effect. These findings have clear implications for educational policy and practice in supporting refugee student integration by targeting both institutional structures and interpersonal dynamics.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Strengthen teacher training on refugee mental health:** Enhance teachers' ability to recognize and respond to PTSD and emotional health issues among refugee students, fostering supportive teacher-student relationships.

**Implement anti-discrimination measures:** Introduce systematic anti-discrimination education programmes and interventions within schools to reduce cultural conflicts and mitigate their negative impacts on refugee students' well-being.

**Ensure residency stability:** Revise residence policies to provide stable legal status for refugee students, thus alleviating socio-psychological stressors related to uncertainty.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Conduct longitudinal studies on well-being dynamics:** Future studies are needed to track how individual, social, and structural factors identified in this study influence refugee students' subjective well-being over an extended period.

**Explore buffering effects of school policies:** Investigate in-depth how specific school-level policies and available community resources can mitigate structural adversities affecting refugee students' emotional and psychological health.

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Tag: Secondary Education / Emergencies

### **IN BRIEF**

## **Re-bordering education: embracing resilience in addressing refugee students' precarity in South African higher education amidst global crises**

Author, Publication, Year: Chiramba, O., *Perspectives in Education*, 2025

**Abstract:** This qualitative case study explores how refugee doctoral students at a university in Gauteng, South Africa, navigate precarity and build resilience within higher education contexts. Through unstructured interviews, complemented by relevant literature, the research identifies four distinct capacities of resilience—absorptive, adaptive, transformative, and anticipative—exhibited both individually and institutionally.



Absorptive resilience involves drawing on prior knowledge, faith, and personal motivation to cope with academic and emotional stress. Adaptive resilience is reflected in the ability to adjust to new academic systems, seek informal peer support, and develop new strategies. Transformative resilience includes efforts to convert obstacles into opportunities—such as initiating new research directions, engaging in activism, or mentoring others. Anticipative resilience refers to forward-thinking strategies, such as planning for funding, documentation, and other long-term risks. Despite limited institutional support reflecting broader societal deficiencies, participants demonstrated significant resilience by transforming educational and migratory challenges into opportunities for growth and adaptation. The study provides a nuanced, context-specific insight into the resilience mechanisms utilized by refugee students at the doctoral level.

### **Recommendations for policy and practice:**

**Establish comprehensive institutional support:** Provide refugee-specific academic, psychosocial, and administrative services to strengthen resilience capacities among refugee students.

**Enhance cultural competence among staff:** Introduce mandatory training programmes to increase university staff's empathy, awareness, and understanding of refugee students' unique experiences and needs.

**Formalize refugee representation and advocacy:** Create distinct platforms within institutions for refugee students to voice concerns and influence policies addressing their specific challenges.

### **Recommendations for research:**

**Investigate institutional resilience frameworks:** Conduct further qualitative and comparative research to explore how resilience capacities function across different institutional and national contexts.

**Compare resilience strategies across educational levels:** Undertake comparative studies examining how resilience-building strategies differ between higher education and primary/secondary education contexts, identifying transferable practices.

Link: [Download article \[pdf\]](#)

Tag: Tertiary Education / Emergencies

# Additional Reading

*Other interesting readings selected by our team (\*= not open access).*

Dovigo, F., Proyer, M., & Veck, W. (2025). Belonging and inclusive refugee education. In E. J. Done (Ed.), *Theorising Exclusionary Pressures in Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Huffman, S., & Wilson, B. (2025). Literacy and identity related to children's education, work, and health: Conversations among adult ESL learners from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 1–18.

Kasper, J., Koyama, J., & Turan, A. (2025). *Working the ruins: Coloniality and what remains in refugee education*. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–21.

Omolo, C. O. (2025). *Assessing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on refugee education: A case study of Kenya and Uganda*. In M. O. Owiso, F. A. Tufa, & A. M. Hersi (Eds.), *Migration and Displacement in the IGAD Region*. Springer, Singapore.

Wario, H. T., Abdi, A. L., & Ismail, A. A. (2025). *Internal displacement and education: Overcoming barriers for learners in Kenya's Northern Rift Valley*. *Perspectives in Education*, 43(2), 97–115.

Webb, A. (2025). *Acts of quiet rebellion: Refugee-led education in Indonesia*. Doctoral dissertation, University College London (UCL).

Webb, S., Maruatona, T., & Arthur, C. (2025). *Lifelong learning in emergencies: From saviourism to solidarity*. *International Review of Education*, 1–21.

## RESOURCES

Inter-Agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET) newsletter APRIL 2025



[INSPIRE Guide to Refugee Inclusion in National Education Systems](#)



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## Digital Literacy interventions – a guide for organizations working in forced displacement contexts



## Refugee Higher Education Global Newsletter 2025 – Volume 5



## EVENTS

### UNHCR Global 15by30 Refugee Higher Education Conference

**Organiser:** UNHCR, Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN), Times Higher Education & Türkiye Council of Higher Education

**Title:** Global 15by30 Refugee Higher Education Conference

**Date:** June 16, 2025

**Location:** İstanbul, Türkiye

### Refugee Education Conference – “Community as a Superpower”

**Organiser:** University of Winchester & Winchester City of Sanctuary

**Title:** Refugee Education Conference: Community as a Superpower

**Date:** June 18, 2025

**Location:** West Downs Quarter, Romsey Road, Winchester SO22 5HT, UK

### International Conference on Refugee Studies and Forced Migration – ICRSF 2025

**Organiser:** World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET)

**Title:** International Conference on Refugee Studies and Forced Migration (ICRSF 2025)

**Date:** July 15-16, 2025

**Location:** London, United Kingdom

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